



TOWN OF CONCORD

Department of Planning & Land Management
141 Keyes Road – Concord, MA - 01742

TO: Christopher Whelan, Town Manager
FROM: Marcia Rasmussen, Director of Planning & Land Management
DATE: May 14, 2015
RE: Update on implementation of the 2005 Comprehensive Long Range Plan

As noted a year ago, 64 of the 354 recommendations contained in the 2005 Comprehensive Long Range Plan have been completed and approximately 164 action items are either underway or ongoing. Below is a list of projects completed with notes added to identify work still to be done.

Actions accomplished

Land Use-2 Maintain and enhance the character of the three Village Centers:

- completed the Village Center study for the three existing business areas in 2008;
- proceeded with the West Concord Master Plan and Design Guidelines in 2010 and 2011;
- rezoned West Concord Business District and West Concord Village District.

Still to be done: a master plan for the Thoreau Depot and Concord Center commercial districts.

Land Use-4 Ensure that the Town preserves the diversity of homes and citizens:

- the Town Manager and Board of Selectmen proactively engaged the MGL 40B planning process to ensure that the Town reached compliance with 10% affordable housing requirements with construction of the 350 unit rental project Concord Mews;
- the Planning Board appointed a task force to consider recommendations of the Mansionization Report and implemented zoning changes for Residence C and B districts; and, the Concord Housing Foundation has funded an intern to assist the Planning Board in 2015 with researching additional zoning initiatives to address ongoing concerns with the impact of house size and massing on existing neighborhoods.
- the Zoning Board of Appeals approved redevelopment of 50 Beharrell Street which included 74 units of housing and 30,000 sq. ft. of commercial (non-retail) use.

Still to be done: Zoning actions that promote smaller homes, greater density, reduce sprawl and require cluster development are great in concept, but there is little desire to change current residential zoning patterns (individual property rights and concerns about impact to property values).

Housing-1 Increase the variety of housing types to meet the needs of Concord's diverse population:

- The Zoning Bylaw was amended to allow greater flexibility to add an accessory dwelling unit within a primary dwelling by adopting a two year time-frame (rather than a set date);
- Building Inspections and Planning staff confirmed that no additional zoning was required to allow agricultural worker housing in trailers or modular structures and that agricultural worker housing could not be included in the State's subsidized housing inventory (because it is not available to all potential owners/renters).

Still to be done: consider additional housing diversity options and opportunities such as multi-family housing bylaws.

Housing-2 Accommodate the evolving needs of individuals, families, the elderly and municipal employees to enable them to move into or remain in Concord:

- The 2010 Housing Plan reviewed senior housing options available in town and determined the needs for a program to provide basic home repair/maintenance services for the elderly (and others);
- New England Deaconess/Abundant Life Communities expanded housing options and constructed an assisted living facility at the Deaconess Abundant Life Community on Old Road to Nine-Acre Corner;
- an assisted living facility is also being discussed as part of the development on former Dept. of Corrections land in West Concord;
- the 2010 West Concord Master Plan supported the concept of developing rental units and creating live/work space in West Concord (leading to approval for the redevelopment of Beharrell Street in 2014).

Housing-3 Provide affordable housing that is in keeping with the character of Concord and meets the state goal of 10% affordable housing in the town:

- The Affordable Housing Committee was replaced with the Concord Housing Development Corporation (CHDC), which allowed the local non-profit to construct additional affordable homeownership units on Elm Street, retain and remodel units on Elm Brook Lane and at Emerson Annex, and create of a small-grants program for income qualified homeowners to receive funds for home repairs/improvements;
- the Town continued its relationship with the CLCT to acquire the Chick land on Walden Street for a combined affordable housing/open space project;
- the CHDC worked with a local trust to acquire land on Elm Street for affordable housing purposes and the Town received funds from local residents interested in renovating the McGrath House as an affordable rental property for a farmer and an assistant farmer;
- Town Meeting adopted a bylaw requiring affordable housing advocates to be involved early in any land acquisition discussion;
- Community Preservation Act (CPA) funds have been given to the Concord Housing Authority (CHA) and the CHDC to subsidize affordable housing and purchase land for affordable housing purposes;

- Concord joined the West Metro HOME Consortium, which provides access to additional federal funds for affordable housing purposes, including maintenance of existing facilities;
- The Board of Selectmen supported the Concord Mews project through assistance with an application to the State's Dept. of Housing and Community Development and letters of support for increased density;
- The Town supported the efforts of the Walden Woods Project and Representative Cory Atkins to transfer 12 acres of State land to the CHDC for affordable housing and open space purposes.
- Town staff explored the potential to include faculty housing at private schools in the State's Subsidized Housing Inventory with the Dept. of Housing and Community Development (but learned it cannot be included because it is not available to all potential owners/renters).

Housing-4 Retain the classic New England character of Concord which optimizes Smart Growth principles and fosters strong neighborhood identities:

- A village overlay district was created for West Concord, which promotes residential development on the second floor of buildings (however, the requirement of 20% affordable units appears to be curbing interest in construction of residential units);
- The Waste Water planning and study by CPW Water & Sewer have identified additional capacity and alternatives that allow for denser developments that meet Town goals.

Still to be done: address combined residential/commercial development to allow a small number of 2nd floor residential units above first floor commercial space in the business districts (i.e., do not require an affordable unit if less than 4 units are proposed).

Economic Development-1 Promote agriculture to complement and reinforce the town's historic heritage:

- A Concord Agriculture Committee was established.
- The Town continues to promote farming operations in the community through acquisition of farmland and lease of open space for farming purposes (purchase of the Marshall farm house and McGrath farm houses for lease by farmers; purchase of the Rogers land for community gardens, support for purchase of the Hubbard Brook farm field by CLCT for continued farming).

Still to be done: Identify town open space suitable for agricultural use and lease the land to farmers.

Economic Development-3 Create a favorable environment that supports the local business community:

- The Town continues to tax commercial, industrial and office property at the residential rate;
- Considered whether a parking garage facility in the Milldam area was feasible (it was not), but hired consultants to study and prepare a Parking Management Plan for both Concord Center (including the Thoreau Depot and Emerson Playground) and West Concord (including Rideout Playground);
- The Waste Water planning and study by CPW Water & Sewer have identified additional capacity and alternatives that make it feasible to expand sewer and water service to

commercially zoned property (i.e., redevelopment of the West Concord Supermarket into a 150+ seat restaurant, redevelopment of 50 Beharrell Street and renovation of the Bradford Mill).

Still to be done: Implementation of the Parking Management Plan, which is anticipated in 2015 through funding allocation at Town Meeting.

Economic Development-4 Increase opportunities for Economic Development that include a diverse mix of businesses:

- After the Village Center study of 2008, Town Meeting voted to identify individual business districts – a Master Plan was prepared for West Concord;
- Encouraged reuse and development of under-utilized commercial buildings to attract economic development at Bradford Mill and 50 Beharrell Street (a.k.a. Brookside Square).

Still to be done: master plans for Thoreau Depot and Concord Center.

Cultural & Historic Resources-1 Protect and maintain Concord's existing historic and cultural resources, as well as Native American archaeological sites and artifacts:

- Completed the transfer of the Town-owned Thoreau Birth-house to the Thoreau Farm Trust, who then used CPA funds to restore the house and property for educational purposes.

Still to be done: a master plan for the Wheeler-Harrington House and Harrington Park.

Cultural & Historic Resources-3 Increase the level of citizen knowledge and responsibility for the Town's unique history and historic and cultural resources:

- The Historical Commission's *Survey and Masterplan* was initially available on the Town's website as a data layer in the Geographic Information System (GIS). With changes to the GIS, this information was removed, but new links to the State's database will be available once the new GIS person has been hired by the Information Technology office.
- The Concord Reconnaissance Report, a program through the Massachusetts Heritage Landscape Inventory program, was completed in 2007.

Still to be done: An archeological reconnaissance and study of McGrath Farm, Harrington Park and other town-owned sites through collaboration with Brandeis University and the Town with findings and information published on-line.

Cultural & Historic Resources-4 Protect historic and cultural resources through regulatory mechanisms and historic designations:

- the Planning Board appointed a task force to consider recommendations of the Mansionization Report and implemented zoning changes for Residence C and B districts;
- Town Meeting voted to create the Church Street Historic District in West Concord.
- Town Meeting voted to amend the Zoning Bylaw to provide a special permit mechanism that allowed Our Lady Help of Christians Church to be placed on a separate parcel of land and sold separately from the Holy Family Parish Hall. The open space portion of the Church lot was placed under a permanent open space restriction as part of the special permit.

Still to be done: Revisions to the Demolition Delay bylaw to enhance protection of historic structures.

Cultural & Historic Resources-5 Foster and maintain Concord's cultural resources:

- 51 Walden Street was placed on the National Register
- The Board of Selectmen worked with the Chamber of Commerce to designate the Concord Center Cultural District (a State program) [this was not an identified action in 2005, because the State program did not exist at the time].

Still to be done: Designation of West Concord Village as a Cultural District.

Natural Resources-1 Preserve existing natural resources:

- The Natural Resources Division has worked to identify and map invasive species.
- The Natural Resources Commission sponsored and Town Meeting adopted a local wetlands bylaw.
- The '2015 Open Space and Recreation Plan' was completed.

Natural Resources-2 Protect agricultural land:

- The Natural Resources Division provides support to the Agricultural Commission;
- The Town supported efforts of CLCT to acquire the Hubbard Brook farm field.
- The Natural Resources Commission supported placing a conservation restriction on town open space land under its purview as part of the McGrath farmstead acquisition.
- The Town acquired the Rogers land with assistance from CLCT and supported funding from the Community Preservation Fund to improve the land for agricultural use and community gardens.

Open Space-1 Protect more open land, both land that is within or contiguous to already conserved open space areas, and pockets of open space within Concord's more densely developed neighborhoods:

- The Town designated and sold former school land for residential development (including 6 units of affordable housing), with the proceeds of the land sale used to acquire the Burke farm land (for future school use) adjacent to the Ripley School site;
- The Town supported the efforts of the Sudbury Valley Trustees to designate some of the Dept. of Corrections land at the Acton-Concord town line as permanently protected open space under Ch. 97.
- CPA funds have been provided to protect and conserve open space (Hubbard Brook farm land and Rogers land).

Recreation-1 Provide active recreational programs on fields and facilities that are well maintained and remain responsive to the changing needs of the community:

- CPA funds were used to develop playing fields at the regional school property, with access for the community's use – two of these fields were construction of artificial turf, which allows year-round access to the fields;

- The Recreation Department and Recreation Commission work to develop programs and schedules that meet the demands of all aquatic-oriented groups in the community.

Recreation-2 Develop a broad range of passive recreational resources to accommodate the interests/needs of all citizens:

- Conduct an engineering study of the 3.5 mile section of the Bruce Freeman Rail Trail initiative (2005) – the Town has gone on to secure CPA funding for the 25% design and State funding for the 75-100% design of the BFRT – with construction funding scheduled in federal fiscal year 2016 for Phase 2C and federal fiscal year 2017 for Phase 2B.
- The Lowell Road boat landing was improved and a new boat landing on the Assabet River was identified and developed at the former Dee Bus facility (and Dino's Restaurant).

Recreation-3 Provide strong childcare programs for both before/after school children and summer recreation campers:

- The Recreation Department has worked to establish a permanent home for the before and after school child care programs at the Harvey Wheeler Community Center and Hunt Gym.

Facilities & Services-1 Maintain and improve the Town's infrastructure:

- Town staff formed a Facilities Planning Committee responsible for maintaining the Town's buildings.
- The Town created a Facilities Supervisor position responsible for overseeing small projects and maintaining systems in existing buildings.

Still to be done: hire a Facility Manager and develop a strategic plan for maintaining Town buildings.

Facilities & Services-3 Provide residents with a full range of high quality services:

- Recycling and waste management services were expanded to allow for convenient and affordable collection.
- The semi-annual Drop-off/Swap-off promotes recycling and re-using unneeded materials.

Transportation & Circulation-1 Create a Comprehensive Town Parking Program that insures safety, improves circulation and protects the economy of the business areas:

- The Keyes Road municipal parking lot was redesigned to provide safer pedestrian access through the lot, improve circulation and enhance the environment.
- Consultants completed a Parking Management Plan in 2013; Town staff refined recommendations from that plan; Parking consultants are being hired to assist with the implementation strategy.

Still to be done: Implementation of the Parking Management Plan. Parking lot upgrades and improvements at the Keyes Road lot, the Walden St. lot, Church St. lot and Commuter lot.

Transportation & Circulation-2 Create safe, functional roads and encourage preservation of the scenic and rural aspects of Concord:

- Traffic Management Group was formed (from Police and CPW-Engineering staff) who have adopted procedures to investigate and improve traffic safety and circulation.
- Signal improvements along Route 2 have been implemented to facilitate traffic flow (but this hasn't necessarily reduced the amount of cut-through traffic in the village centers as hoped).

Still to be done: Study whether a round-about at Laws Brook Road/Commonwealth Ave. would improve traffic function and pedestrian safety in West Concord

Transportation & Circulation-3 Maintain involvement in Regional Transportation issues:

- Improvements to the Fitchburg commuter rail line, including the double-track system from South Acton westward and currently under construction, are expected to expand and improve train service in the region;
- Bridge repairs on Heath's Bridge, Flint's Bridge and Pine Street Bridge were completed.
- Route 2 - Crosby Corner improvements are under construction (Cambridge Turnpike improvements, under design, were funded by the State as part of the Crosby Corner project.

Still to be done: Route 2 Rotary redesign reinstalled in the Transportation Improvement Program; replacement of the Nashoba Brook culvert on Route 2 near the town line; repair/replace the Pail Factory Bridge over the Nashoba Brook on Commonwealth Ave.

Transportation & Circulation-4 Create a system of pedestrian/bicycle pathways to provide a safe alternative network for moving around Concord:

- The Emerson-Thoreau Amble was completed in 2013, providing a pedestrian path from Concord Center to Brister's Hill.

Still to be done: Feasibility study and potential construction of a pedestrian bridge over the Assabet River connecting 300 Baker Ave. businesses with West Concord Village; acquire additional easements for connecting open spaces and pedestrian trails along the Assabet River; explore opportunities for improved pedestrian/bicyclist access over Route 2.

Governance-1 Improve Open Town Meeting and citizen committee participation:

- A Governance Committee was formed to review Concord's Administrative and Organizational structure in 2013 with a final report submitted in the fall of 2014.
- In addition to reviewing the Administrative and Organizational structure, the Governance Committee is evaluating all committees in terms of function, responsibility and decision-making authority.

Still to be done: implement recommendations of the Governance Committee report.

Governance-2 Support a Strong Town Manager form of government:

- The Town conducted a management/organizational review of Town staff to ensure that the right job descriptions were in place and salary structures were appropriate in 2008.

